



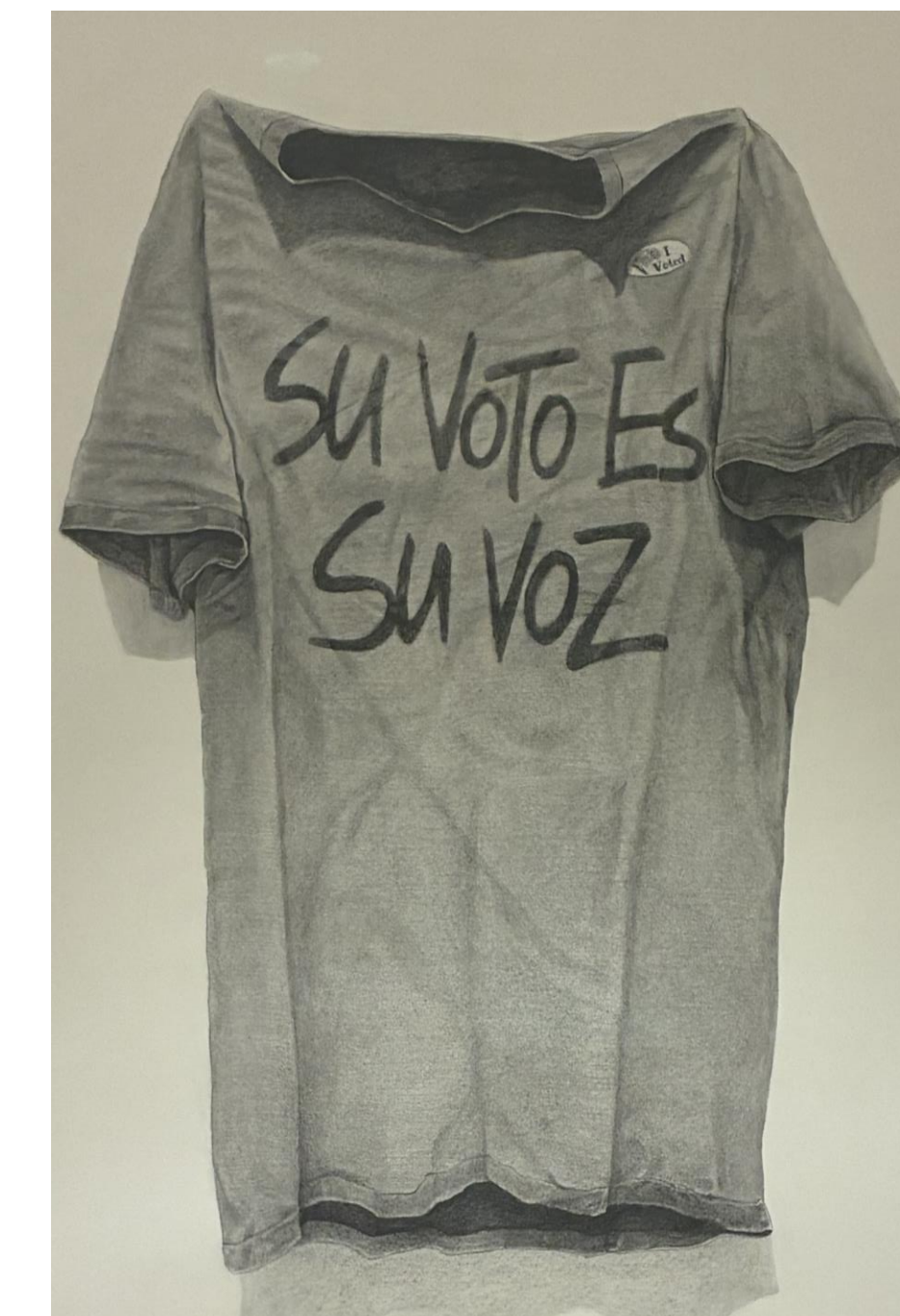
Democracy is a Verb!

Samantha Galan , Summer 2026



Foundations of Democracy

Virtue is the foundation of democracy as virtuous people should lead the government. In Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle stated how virtue can be produced and destroyed (Aristotle, 50). Aristotle affirmed how virtue is not perfect and is a process worth striving for in our lives. If people did not learn and grow from virtue, there "would have been no need for teachers" (Aristotle, 50). This can be applied to how democracy should elect virtuous leaders who can teach citizens to be virtuous. This will create a democratic cycle of virtue. Our founding fathers read Ancient Greek Philosophers, and they believed virtue is important in creating and preserving a democracy. I believe it is important to have virtue in consideration when choosing representatives and future leaders for America as it can affect the livelihood of citizens. In addition, I like how Aristotle emphasized how virtue is imperfect just like how humans are imperfect. Aristotle was able to articulate philosophical thoughts in a way where common people can easily absorb it.



Civic Engagement

The definition of civil engagement is people actively participating in a community and in a democracy. It refers to the duty of a citizen to perform actions that benefit the community and address their concerns. If one citizen's voice is heard, a creates a mutual relationship in a democracy. Civil engagement helps keep a democracy healthy and active. In the letter from Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King Jr stated how we all "must come to see that human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability" (Martin Luther King Jr, 463). MLK spoke on how effort and persistence to not be complicit in a democracy will create a positive change. Civil engagement allows citizens to fully participate in a democracy where their voice has a direct impact.

Community and Freedom

Jean-Jaques Rousseau was an Enlightenment philosopher who moved away from religious thinking to that of reason. He stated how a democratic government should use their power in trusted from the people for the conformably and good of the public (Rousseau, 282). Rousseau advocated for how common people should be equal and free to actively participate in a society. He believed in a collective power where everyone had a part in the community. This connects to how popular sovereignty, or people having the power is an important pillar in democracy. It is important to acknowledge the general will of citizens because they are who make up the democratic community. I like Rousseau's work as he critiqued Locke, a different enlightenment thinker, who believed in a majority (wealthy men) should only participate in democracy. Rousseau was a romanticist or idealist, and his ideas can be hard to enforce in a real society. However, I believe a democratic government should at least try to put people first in society.

Justice and Calls to Action

Justice is for all. In the Letter from Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King Jr stated how "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (Martin Luther King Jr, 457). MLK affirmed how the fight for justice affects everyone as injustices is a threat to justice. Americans should not pick and choose who gets justice and have the mindset of "Us vs Them". Justice ties everyone together in an "inescapable network of mutuality" (Martin Luther King Jr, 457). Justice is an ideal everyone in a democracy should strive for as it can only be beneficial. A democracy to be preserved must listen to the injustices experienced by the citizens to succeed. One quote I love from MLK is "anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider" (Martin Luther King Jr, 457). As Americans and human beings, we deserve justice. Americans who band together striving for justice can leave a lasting impact on how a democracy restores justice to those harmed.



Knowledge for Freedom at UT San Antonio Migration, Democracy, and the American Experiment